DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 251 520 UD 023 390

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TITLE Cambridge Desegregation Succeeding.
INSTITUTION Massachusetts State Dept. of Education, Boston. Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunities.
PUB DATE Jan 83
NOTE 17p.; For related documents, see UD 023 155-156 and UD 023 396-399; Document may have marginal reproducibility.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)
JOURNAL CIT A Chronicle: Equal Education in Massachusetts; v4 n4 p2-16 Jan 1983

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; *Desegregation Effects; *Desegregation Plans; Elementary Education; Government Role; *Open Enrollment; *School Choice; School Desegregation; State Government
IDENTIFIERS *Massachusetts (Cambridge)

ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of the controversy concerning "freedom of choice" desegregation plans and presents a case study of the plan adopted by Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1981. Following the introduction, a short explanation of the plan's distinctive feature, controlled open enrollment, is given. (Under controlled open enrollment, no students are assigned to schools on the basis of their home residence. Instead, parents must choose the schools they want their children to attend before they are enrolled in the system, all student assigments are subject to explicit desegregation controls, and no students are given absolute guarantees of attending one particular school.) Next, enrollment statistics are presented and prior desegregation efforts, especially the 1965 Racial Balance Plan, are detailed, with special attention being given to the role of the State. Details of how controlled open enrollment works in Cambridge, a table showing the distribution of new students after implementation, and some conclusions about why certain schools attracted particular groups are then provided. Evidence is presented showing that, while some parents apparently made informed decisions, many did not indicate special reasons for choosing certain schools. Other topics arising from the new policy are then discussed, including fairness and the plan's impact on neighborhood schools and busing. Next, statistics documenting the plan's effectiveness in substantially desegregating Cambridge schools are presented. And finally, mention is made of the Cambridge plan's transferability to other systems. (KH)

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Equal Education in Massachusetts

A Chronicle

January 1983 Volume IV Number 4

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Cambridge Desegregation Succeeding

By Michael J. Alves

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Massachusetts Department of Education. December 1982

Introduction

In Boston, Chicago, Nashville, Denver and elsewhere there is a continuing dispute over the viability of so-called "freedom of choice" desegregation plans in the 1980's. That "choice" is the center of controversy is, of course, nothing new: strategies to increase choice (open enrollment, magnet schools, optional attendance zones, voluntary transfers, etc.) have been a recurring and problematic theme in the story of desegregation since the *Brown* decision in 1954.

In fact, during the 1950's and 1960's "free-choice" was the only mode of desegregation for literally hundreds of school districts. Unfortunately, history tells us that such plans were at best "token" remedial measures. And, with its *Green* decision in 1968, the Supreme Court declared that leaving desegregation up to individual choice was not a legally sufficient remedy in the face of a Constitutional violation when there are "other ways" with which to convert to a "unitary and nonracial school system" (see *Green v. County School Board of New County*, 391 U.S. 430).

It was precisely because of the failure of "free-choice" plans that the federal courts adopted more stringent remedial standards that sanctioned the imposition of *mandatory* pupil reassignment plans in the early 1970's (see *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, 402 U.S. 1). During this period the federal courts formulated a remedial principle commonly referred to as the doctrine of "maximum feasible desegregation." In a landmark decision in 1971, the Supreme Court held that:

> Having once found a (Constitutional) violation, the district judge or school authorities should make every effort to achieve the GREATEST DEGREE OF ACTUAL DESEGREGATION taking into account the PRACTICALITIES of the situation (see *Davis v. Board of School Commissioner of Mobile County*, 402 U.S. 33, 37 — Emphasis Added).

This meant that the lower courts could hold school officials accountable for the actual elimination of "racially identifiable public schooling" and that in so doing, racial ratios could be used as a "starting point" in determining the extent to which a school defendant satisfied its constitutional obligation not to segregate students on the basis of race (see *Swann*, op. cit.).

Ultimately, the crucial test of any desegregation plan is that it works (see *Davis, supra*, 402 U.S. at 33). And with respect to "choice" the federal courts have established that free choice devices are allowable tools to the extent that they facilitate actual desegregation. In the words of Judge W. Arthur Garrity Jr.:

> A desegregation remedy must do more than give effect to the "free choices" of students and parents, when the effect of these choices is simply to maintain segregation (U.S. District Court, *Memorandum of Decision and Remedial Orders*, Morgan V. Kerrigan, p. 31, July 5, 1975; also see *Monroe V. Board of Commissioner of the City of Jackson*, 1968, 391 U.S. 450).

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Editor: Meyer Weinberg
Managing Editor: Catherine Walsh
Layout: Karen Chrisman

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What is noteworthy about the current conflict surrounding the use of choice is that it is based on the argument that the federal courts have been too inflexible in interpreting the doctrine of "maximum feasible desegregation" and have ordered mandatory student assignment plans that generated counter-productive results, e.g., white flight, forced busing and erosion of public confidence in desegregating public schools.

For example, in Chicago, the U.S. Justice Department is currently arguing that given the "practicalities" of anticipated white flight, opposition to forced busing and the relative scarcity of white students local school officials are constitutionally correct in implementing a desegregation plan that relies almost exclusively on voluntary student reassignments. In this instance, "choice" is being explicitly interpreted as a necessary and unavoidable alternative and/or trade-off to the actual elimination of racially minority identifiable public schooling in Chicago. And, in Boston, increased choice is being presented as an equitable substitute to a court-ordered assignment plan that some now claim limits the educational options of Black and other minority students. An attorney representing the Black plaintiffs has already submitted a "free choice" assignment plan to the federal court. However, this plan has been opposed by another attorney of record for the plaintiffs and has been rejected "without prejudice" by Judge Garrity on the basis that the plan was too vague on the issues of constitutional safeguards and administrative feasibility.

In light of this assignment controversy, it may be both timely and instructive to take a close look at how another urban school system, Cambridge, Massachusetts, is in fact accommodating increased choice while meeting existing state and federal desegregation standards. In reflecting upon the Cambridge experience a critical question for other systems is how they, too, can make increased parental and student choice compatible with the actual elimination of racially identifiable public schooling and otherwise satisfy the remedial test of "maximum feasible desegregation." By so doing perhaps we may all gain some insight into solving the most complex and difficult problem in American education —how best to achieve stable and beneficial long-term school desegregation.

Author's note: The data contained in this analysis were obtained through the routine monitoring of the Cambridge desegregation plan by staff from the Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity, Massachusetts Department of Education, during the months of September, October, and November 1982. Any opinions expressed herein are mine, and do not represent the official position of the Massachusetts Department of Education per se. Also, this analysis only addresses the *student* aspects of the Cambridge desegregation plan.

The Cambridge plan

In March 1981, the Cambridge school committee voluntarily adopted the final phase of its "long-range" school desegregation plan. This action was preceded by the implementation of two interim plans in 1979 and 1980, and culminated nearly three years of broadbased and at times strident school/community planning (see *The Chronicle*, Vol. I, No. 6 and Vol. II, No. 1).

A distinctive feature of this final plan was that it abolished all neighborhood schools, e.g., schools to which students are assigned solely on the basis of their home residence. In lieu of individual school attendance districts, the school committee has instituted a new student assignment plan whereby school officials are required to explicitly accommodate increased choice within specific desegregation related constraints, i.e., *controlled open enrollment*. (The phrase "controlled open enrollment" will be used throughout this article to describe Cambridge's new student assignment policy. Perhaps a more accurate but cumbersome phrase would be "voluntary controlled choice" or "increased competition within desegregation controls." In any event, the main point is that the reader understands that in Cambridge no students are assigned to public schools on the basis of their home residence. Unlike other open enrollment plans, in Cambridge no students are given a student assignment based on where they live and then given the option to transfer into another school to facilitate desegregation. Under the new assignment plan Cambridge parents *must* choose the schools they want their children to attend *before* they are enrolled in the system, and all student assignments are subject to explicit desegregation controls and no students are given an absolute guarantee of attending any one particular school. In a sense, the Cambridge assignment policy can be called "forced choice").

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How does controlled open enrollment work in Cambridge? To what extent has it facilitated the desegregation objectives of the school committee? And, does it have transfer value for other desegregating systems? Before answering these questions, here are some facts about Cambridge and its desegregation process.

- Since Cambridge has one public high school and no separate intermediate schools, the desegregation process has directly involved only those students and parents in elementary schools serving grades K-8. As of November 1, 1982, the desegregation plan affects approximately 5,400 students (60 percent white and 40 percent minority) in 13 schools:

- Ironically, it was in part the failure to even-handedly administer an earlier controlled open enrollment policy that led to Cambridge's desegregation troubles in the late 1970's. In 1965, following the passage of the State Racial Imbalance Act (RIA), Cambridge school authorities voluntarily adopted their first plan to "eliminate and prevent" racial imbalance at the elementary level. At that time Cambridge had one school, the Houghton, in which the "non-white" enrollment exceeded 50 percent in violation of state law. (The 1965 Racial Imbalance Act gave the state Board of Education broad powers to assure that no Massachusetts public schools would remain over 50 percent "non-white." A key feature of this law was that

Table I Cambridge Enrollment: November 1, 1982

School	Grade Level	White		Black		Asian		Hispanic		Native American		Total	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Agassiz	(K-8)	165	61	75	28	23	8	6	2	2	1%	271	100
Fitzgerald	(K-8)	311	53	140	25	42	6	78	14			571	100
Fletcher	(K-8)	190	53	78	22	6	2	83	23			347	100
Haggerty	(K-8)	83	57	45	31	13	9	5	3			146	100
Harrington	(K-8)	627	78	116	14	17	2	42	6			802	100
Kennedy	(5-8)	312	72	76	18	2	N/A	41	10			431	100
King	(K-8)	242	52	176	38	24	4	26	6	1	N/A	469	100
Longfellow	(K-8)	208	50	64	15	25	6	122	29			417	100
Morse	(K-8)	201	56	109	29	33	9	34	9			377	100
Peabody	(K-8)	272	54	142	28	52	10	34	8			500	100
Roberts	(K-8)	190	58	92	28	7	2	41	12			330	100
Tobin	(K-8)	270	59	133	29	15	3	39	9			457	100
NAS	(K-8)	180	54	127	39	7	2	18	5			332	100
Total		3,251	60	1,373	25	264	5	569	10	6	N/A	5,463	100

- Although Cambridge is perceived as a liberal, progressive city with abundant resources and a substantial middle-class, 52 percent of its elementary school enrollment is currently eligible for the federally subsidized school lunch program. A key point to be stressed is that the majority of Cambridge public school students are from low-income families.
- At least 20 percent of all school-age children living in Cambridge attend either private or parochial schools. In 1981, Cambridge residents sent their children to over 50 nonpublic schools of which 21 are located in Cambridge. While none of these schools were created in response to desegregation, there is nonetheless intense competition for students. (Cambridge is the only Massachusetts city with more nonpublic than public schools.)

unlike the desegregation requirements of the federal courts, the state Board of Education did not have to prove "intent" to segregate before it issued remedial orders. In 1974, the statute was amended in a way that removed the power of the State Board to require the mandatory reassignment of students solely on the showing of statistical racial imbalance or so-called *de facto* segregation of non-whites (See Massachusetts General Laws of 1974, Chapter 636, Section 37D).

Under its original plan, Cambridge was to achieve racial balance by building three new schools with increased capacities and expanded attendance districts, and by modifying its open enrollment policy to prohibit any transfer that would have a negative racial balance effect. Despite receiving extra state reim-

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bursement for new school construction under RIA, it took the school committee seven years to build the King, Tobin and Kennedy schools. When they opened their relationship to the 1965 Racial Balance Plan was dubious at best:

— In 1971, the King opened as a replacement school for the Houghton. However, no new district lines were drawn, and the school was initially racially balanced by the transferring-in of white special needs students, and by the displacement of Black families due to the construction of Harvard graduate-student housing in the district.

— In 1972, the Tobin opened with an attendance district that included a new low-income housing project that was predominantly Black and excluded white neighborhoods that were closer to the new school.

— In 1972, the Kennedy opened with an attendance district that included a predominantly white section of the Roberts school district.

— During the mid-1970's the state Board of Education made findings of racial imbalance at the King, Tobin, and Roberts schools.

In addition to the issues surrounding new school construction, the school committee never truly enforced its racial balance restrictions on open enrollment transfers. And in 1978, school department officials provided the state's Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity with enrollment data that showed nearly 1,100 students had been allowed to attend schools outside their home-districts, in contradiction to the school committee's own Racial Balance Plan, and in ways which directly contributed to the minority identifiability of five schools:

Table II
*Minority Identifiable Public Schools: May 1978

School	% Minority	% Minority Systemwide	% Identifiable
Roberts	63	34	+14
Fletcher	62	34	+13
Webster	57	34	+8
King	56	34	+7
Tobin	52	34	+3

*Note that under existing federal desegregation standards a minority identifiable school is one in which the minority enrollment is greater than 15% of the systemwide minority percentage. In Cambridge, any school with more than 49% minority enrollment was considered to be minority identifiable. Also, in 1978 any school with a "non-white" enrollment in excess of 50% was identified as "racially imbalanced" under state law.

• Another key point is that the state's inquiry into the factors behind minority isolation in Cambridge clearly indicated that such racial imbalance was not fortuitous. That is, there appeared to be a positive correlation between the official actions and policies of school committees, past and present, and the increase in minority-identifiable schools.

Therefore, in developing a legally sufficient remedy, school authorities had to concern themselves with the requirements of the state Racial Imbalance Act. They also had to come to grips with the elimination of minority-identifiable schools as defined under federal desegregation standards. Due to the *potential* of federal constitutional liability, the state Department of Education held Cambridge accountable in developing a desegregation plan that would satisfy a federal district court. Therefore, in formulating a legally sufficient plan Cambridge school officials, with assistance from the state Department of Education, fashioned a plan that was consistent with prevailing federal judicial "principles of remedy" for desegregation cases. Specifically, Cambridge held itself accountable to the standards put forth by W. Arthur Garrity in the Boston case (See United States District Court, *Memorandum of Decision and Remedial Orders*, Civil Action No. 72-911-G, Tallulah Morgan et al v. John J. Kerrigan et al, pp. 24-67, July 5, 1975).

Also to further assure that Cambridge developed a legally sufficient plan under both state and federal desegregation standards, the school committee hired civil rights attorney, J. Harold Flannery, as their legal advisor. Mr. Flannery was one of the principal lawyers representing the Black plaintiffs in the Boston case.

• Throughout the desegregation process, elected officials, administrators, parents, teachers, and involved citizens consistently declared that Cambridge was not going to become "another Boston." By this they meant that Cambridge would develop its own desegregation plan, without the imposition of a remedy by either the state Board of Education or the federal courts. As a result, Cambridge

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became one of those rare communities to *voluntarily* develop and implement its own *comprehensive* school desegregation plan in advance of state and federal enforcement actions and/or private litigation.

- The actual desegregation process was carried out over a three-year period from 1979 to 1981 and was striking for several reasons:
  1. the quality of leadership displayed at all levels in support of Cambridge coming to grips with its constitutional obligations in the absence of the intervention of a federal court.
  2. the amount of genuine citizen participation in the formulation of the remedial plans.
  3. the absence of administrative chaos and educational disruption during its three years of implementation, and
  4. the extraordinary efforts made to accommodate the varied and legitimate interests of all parents while satisfying both state and federal desegregation standards.

This is not to suggest that desegregation was easy. It was not. As in all cities with diverse racial, ethnic and social-economic groups and competing political constituencies, desegregation generated intense conflict in Cambridge. However, such conflict appears to have been faced up to in a way which did not undermine public confidence in desegregating public schools.

- As of November 1, 1982, Cambridge had 2,456 students (48 percent white, 52 percent minority) attending public schools outside of their original home-districts. (In Cambridge, a home district school is defined as a school to which a child would have been assigned before desegregation.) Of these "out-of-district" students, 1,233 (51 percent) are doing so as a direct result of desegregation measures that produced "mandatory" pupil reassignments: redistricting, school closings, relocation of atypical programs, and pairing. Some 1,223 (49 percent) are attending different schools on the basis of choice: magnet schools, voluntary controlled transfers and controlled open enrollment.

Another key point is that Cambridge voluntarily adopted a desegregation plan that achieved actual desegregation through a combination of mandatory and voluntary student reassignments. And in terms of impact, 46 percent of Cambridge's elementary enrollment are currently attending different schools as a consequence of school desegregation.

- As noted, the actual desegregation process took three years (1979-1981) and involved both mandatory and voluntary student reassignments:

Cambridge Desegregation (1979-1981)

Year	*Desegregation Measures*
1971:	— controlled transfers
Phase I	— magnet schools
1980:	— redistricting
Phase II	— relocation of atypical programs
	— consolidation of King and Tobin Magnet Programs
	— closed Gore School
1981:	— Merged the Webster and
Phase III	CAPS Schools into the New Alternative School (NAS)
	— paired Roberts (K-4) and Kennedy (5-8)
	— closed Lincoln School
	— abolished neighborhood schools and introduced new controlled open enrollment assignment policy

The 1979 plan relied exclusively on voluntary student transfers and did not significantly reduce minority isolation. In fact, this plan actually increased the minority identifiability of the Fletcher and Roberts Schools (see Table IV).

The 1980 plan involved primarily mandatory pupil reassignment measures and did significantly reduce minority isolation in four of the five minority identifiable schools (see Table III). However, this plan did not include any measures for the Roberts. And it essentially had no impact on three racially identifiable white schools (Kennedy, Harrington, and Haggerty), and it even increased the white identifiability of the Peabody School from 79 percent to 89 percent white.

On the other hand, the 1981 plan employed both mandatory and voluntary reassignment measures and effectively eliminated minority identifiable public schooling in Cambridge. This plan addressed the outstanding deficiencies of earlier plans and was approved by the state Board of Education as a "stable, long-term solution" to minority isolation in Cambridge.

As of 1982, the sole method by which stu-

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dents get assigned to desegregating public schools is through the workings of the controlled open enrollment assignment policy.

Controlled open enrollment: how it works in Cambridge

Under Cambridge's new student assignment policy, before any incoming students can be assigned to a public elementary school their parents or legal guardians must first undergo a student registration and admissions process that is coordinated by staff from the Parents Information Center (PIC). The PIC, which was originally created to help parents cope with desegregation implementation, is now solely responsible for student assignments and functions as part of the central administrative staff under the supervision of the Project Director for Desegregation, Dorothy Jones.

Within the PIC, a single student assignment officer, Peter Colleary, makes *all* final decisions around new student assignments and intrasystem transfers. His decisions are, however, subject to a "hardship" appeals process that can go all the way to the school committee if not resolved at a lower administrative level. During the past two years Colleary has made over 1,700 student assignment decisions under the controlled open enrollment policy. Of these, less than 100 have been appealed and only about 10 percent have been successful in overturning the initial decision of the assignment officer.

According to Cambridge school officials, other PIC staff, parents, and principals, Colleary has been able to carry out his duties with integrity. As currently administered, internal interference and external political manipulation of the assignment process do not appear to be problems. Although there have been instances when some people of power have sought special favors, to date Colleary has been able to run a "clean" operation.

This is important, since before desegregation Cambridge did not have a uniform or procedurally fair way of assigning students to public schools. Prior to desegregation individual principals would typically enroll students during the first few weeks of classes or as they "showed-up" during the course of the school year. Also, parents who were new to the system would often enroll their children by contacting the superintendent's office, and would then be told to report to a particular school, based on the parent's declared home address. In either event, a child's actual residence was rarely, if ever, verified by school officials, and consequently Cambridge had a significant number of students attending schools in violation of its neighborhood school assignment policy. (Prior to desegregation, the Cambridge public schools had a history of "alternative" schools and of students attending public schools outside of their neighborhood attendance districts. In 1978, 21 percent of Cambridge's elementary enrollment were attending out of district schools. However, assignment data provided to the state's Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity by school officials in May of 1978 showed that nearly 79 percent of these out of district assignments were contributing to increasing racial segregation in the city).

In addition to open enrollment, Cambridge also provided parents with "choice" through the operation of several "alternative" or "magnet school" programs. While these programs offered parents real options to neighborhood schools, and were themselves racially balanced, there were occasions when white students were recruited and admitted out of minority-identifiable schools.

Whether through the deliberate misrepresentation of home-addresses, manipulation of open enrollment, or faulty magnet school admission practices, the fact remains that, in the absence of a unitary student assignment plan, Cambridge officials allowed student assignments which increased racial segregation.

Now, under controlled open enrollment, as parents enter the system they must centrally register their children and, in so doing, get to select the schools for their children by rank-order of preference: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th choice. Once the basic registration application has been completed (verification of Cambridge residency and submission of health records) the student assignment officer then attempts to accommodate the parents' preferred choices subject only to a series of specific desegregation-related constraints.

For example, if a child's attendance at his/her first choice school is determined to have a positive racial balance effect (no school shall be more than 50 percent minority), and if there is space available at the child's particular grade-level, then the assignment officer grants the assignment on a "first-come, first served" basis. In the event parents do not get their first

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choice, the assignment officer then evaluates their second choice and so on until an appropriate assignment is made.

In addition to the racial balance and space availability constraints, *sibling preference* (if a family already has at least one other child in their school of choice), and *transportation feasibility* (the practicality of transporting a child to their school of choice given existing bus routes and the availability of alternative public transit) are taken into consideration in granting new student assignments.

The above policy governs all new student assignments (new admissions as well as intra-system transfers) with the exception of those students requiring bilingual and special education. For these students, school assignments are made initially on a "programmatic" basic, e.g., all Hispanic bilinguals are assigned to the Longfellow and all Portuguese bilingual students are sent to the Harrington where such programs are located. Once such students are ready to be "mainstreamed" into regular education programs, they are considered new students to the system and must reapply for a permanent school assignment under the rules of the controlled open enrollment policy.

To what extent have parents preferred choices been accommodated?

As of November 1, 1982, 899 new students (excluding 72 new bilingual and special needs students) were enrolled in Cambridge under the controlled open enrollment assignment policy. Of these new students, 681 or 76 percent were assigned to their first choice-schools and 110 or 12 percent received either their second or third choices.

On the other hand, 108 or 12 percent received what can be described as a "mandatory" school assignment — when a child is assigned to a school other than the ones initially selected. According to Colleary, there were primarily three reasons for these mandatory assignments:

1. late registration,
2. parents' requested schools were incompatible with either the racial balance or space availability constraints, or
3. some parents simply did not select any schools of choice and left their child's school assignment up to Colleary.

After controlling for mandatory assignments, the above data can provide us with some tentative statements concerning the attractiveness of individual schools and/or their ability to accommodate new students by race:

- for new minority students the most attractive and/or accommodating schools appear to be the Peabody, Fitzgerald and the Morse. The least attractive and/or accommodating appear to be the Longfellow, Kennedy and the Haggerty;
- for new white students the most attractive and/or accommodating schools appear to be the Peabody, King and Roberts. The least attractive and/or accommodating appear to be the Kennedy, Harrington and the Haggerty;
- the Peabody received the most new students (138) and the Kennedy the least (27);
- the New Alternative School (NAS) had the

Table III Distribution of New Students: November 1, 1982

School	*Number Assignments*	*1st Choice*	*2nd/3rd Choice*	*Mandatory*	*% 1st Choice*	*% 2nd/3rd Choice*	*% Mandatory*	*No. White*	*No. Minority*
Agassiz	67	62	5	0	93	7	0	36	31
Fitzgerald	100	81	6	13	81	6	13	40	60
Fletcher	50	47	0	3	94	0	6	32	18
Haggerty	34	24	0	10	71	0	29	14	20
Harrington	83	48	10	25	58	12	30	26	57
Kennedy	27	16	0	11	59	0	41	10	17
King	87	78	6	3	90	6	4	52	35
Longfellow	36	16	9	11	44	25	31	22	14
Morse	89	70	19	0	79	21	0	43	46
NAS	30	29	0	1	97	0	3	15	15
Peabody	138	99	24	15	72	17	11	64	74
Roberts	87	64	7	16	74	8	18	56	31
Tobin	71	47	24	0	66	34	0	34	37
Totals	899	681	110	108	76	12	12	444 (49%)	455 (51%)

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highest percentage of 1st choice accommodations (97%) and the Kennedy had the highest percentage of mandatory assignments (41%);
- the Fitzgerald is enrolling the most new minority students (60) and the Longfellow the least (14);
- the Peabody is enrolling the most new white students (64) and the Kennedy the least (10); and
- the Harrington had the most mandatory assignments (25) while the Agassiz, Morse and Tobin had no mandatory assignments.

As noted, inferences concerning individual school-attractiveness should be made with caution since the above data only represent how parent choices were accommodated, given the primary constraints of racial balance and space availability. For example, the Longfellow enrolled few new minority students due in part to the fact that the school houses the entire Hispanic bilingual program for the elementary schools, and its building is currently undergoing extensive rennovations. In other words, there are racial balance and space availability issues at work in the school which limits its ability to enroll new minority students, and which are beyond the control of school officials to change at this time.

To what degree are parents making informed choices about schools?

Available evidence indicates when parents select schools the vast majority do so with specific reasons in mind. A review of registration applications shows that parents are encouraged to cite their reasons for selecting particular schools; the most frequent reasons given include: "I heard good things about the school.... my other children went there.... I like the teachers.... it's close to my home...." It should also be pointed out that a number of parents did not indicate any special reasons for choosing certain schools.

In order to facilitate parents making informed choices, staff from the PIC encourage and arrange for parents to visit schools and talk with teachers and other parents before they register their children. Also, each school has a brochure which describes its educational program, and new parents are given a copy of the desegregation plan during the registration process.

Is the new assignment policy fair to all new parents?

According to Margaret Gallagher, a parent coordinator in the PIC and activist parent from the Kennedy School, the "best" feature about the new assignment policy is that it "makes everybody play the game by the same rules." Before this policy went into effect it was generally believed that politically savvy and wealthy parents had a distinct advantage in getting their kids into the "best" schools. Now in Cambridge, no one has an economic advantage in gaining access to a quality education, nor is "choice" limited to those schools and programs that have "friends" on the school committee.

New student assignment process and procedural fairness

— In early November PIC staff hold pre-registration informational meetings at different locations in the city. Public notification of these meetings are circulated through local media, day-care centers, community organizations, churches, public schools and other sources.
— The actual kindergarten registration/assignment process begins in early December with public notification of exact time and location being widely circulated throughout the city.
— As parents register for kindergarten, student assignments are made on a "first-come, first served" basis.
— The student assignment process continues through the summer and into the new school year with all parents given the opportunity to select their schools of choice within desegregation related constraints.
— Parents who do not get their 1st choice school are given the option of being placed on a waiting list while they accept another school of choice.

What is becoming clear is that parents who register early in the previous school year have a significantly greater likelihood of getting their first choice school than parents who register late. This year, 76 percent of all new students received their first choice schools, and only 12 percent were given mandatory assignments. However, approximately 50 percent of the students who entered the system after the opening of school in September were given mandatory assignments. It is also clear that the majority of these parents who registered their children late were new residents and were not identifiable in terms of race or

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social/economic status.

As long as all parents receive notification as to when the registration process begins, and as long as they receive equal treatment in terms of understanding the rules of the assignment policy, then controlled open enrollment should continue to operate as a procedurally fair way of accommodating increased parental choice in Cambridge.

Has controlled open enrollment destroyed the concept of "neighborhood" schools?

The school committee only abolished "neighborhood" schools as a way of assigning students to public schools. With respect to parents still having access to schools closest to their homes: as of November 1st of this year, 54 percent of all students were attending their old home-district schools, while 46 percent were attending other schools of choice.

Has controlled open enrollment produced more "busing"?

In 1978, Cambridge claimed 148 students were being transported for purposes of racial balance, and in 1981 they claimed 1,481. There is no question that desegregation has generated more busing. However, since redistricting involved only contiguous schools, the bulk of the increased busing has been due to accommodating increased parental choice. (This does not mean that Cambridge has increased its school busing costs tenfold, but merely shows that significantly more students who are bused can now be claimed for 100 percent state reimbursement under Chapter 636.)

To what extent has controlled open enrollment facilitated the desegregation objectives of the school committee?

As pointed out, the Cambridge school committee developed its desegregation plan in order to satisfy both state and federal remedial standards. Therefore, the critical test of their plan is whether it has eliminated racially identifiable public schooling: the degree to which all schools fall within 15 percentage points of the systemwide racial proportions.

(Please refer to Table IV.)

Table IV Desegregation Measures and Effect on Racial Identifiable Schools: 1978-1982

School	Pre Desegregation 1978	1979 *Phase I* —Controlled Transfer Policy —Continue 4 Magnet Schools		1980 *Phase II* —Partial Redistricting —Relocation of atypical programs (TBE, SPED, ATI) —Consolidation of King Magnet —Close Core	
White Enrollment					
	1978	1979		1980	
	# %	#	%	#	%
Kennedy (K-8)	563 93.0	528	94.5	540	93.9
Harrington (K-8)	763 90.0	737	88.8	674	83.2
Peabody (K-8)	382 84.0	358	78.5	266	88.7
Haggerty (K-6)	144 80.0	134	78.8	110	70.5
Core (K-8)	83 80.0				
Agassiz (K-8)	206 79.0	194	72.9	152	66.7
Lincoln (K-8)	106 71.0	93	60.4	86	60.1
Morse (K-8)	252 70.0	236	64.1	214	60.1
Fitzgerald (K-8)	499 69.0	466	5.2	387	59.7
Longfellow (K-8)	281 58.0	290	59.5	243	53.6
CAPS (K-8)	109 57.0	116	57.4	114	56.7
Tobin (K-8)	282 48.0	304	49.9	301	55.9
King (K-8)	266 44.0	252	46.9	283	51.1
Webster (K-8)	103 43.0	102	46.2	106	53.3
Fletcher (K-8)	113 38.0	107	34.3	192	52.9
Roberts (K-8)	150 37.0	143	35.7	138	35.5
Totals	4,302 66.0	4,060	64.8	3,692	61.7

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In 1978, Cambridge had 10 schools (62 percent of its elementary schools) that were racially identifiable under existing federal standards: five minority identifiable and five white identifiable. With the implementation of its 1981 plan, Cambridge effectively eliminated racially identifiable schools with one exception, the Harrington, which remains identifiably white.

Such effective school desegregation was achieved through a combination of mandatory and voluntary student reassignment measures, and the record shows that "choice" alone was not an effective desegregation device. There is, however, strong evidence showing controlled open enrollment is working towards "stabilizing" successful desegregation. In 1982, no schools have drifted toward re-segregation, and in fact all schools are moving closer toward reflecting the citywide racial proportions of 60 percent white and 40 percent minority than in any previous year of desegregation.

Has desegregation generated white-middle class flight?

Post Desegregation

1981 *Phase III*	1982 *Phase IV*
—Controlled Open Enrollment (COE)	—COE
—Webster/CAPS Merger	—Renovation of Roberts, Longfellow, and NAS
—Kennedy/Roberts Pairing	
—Closed Lincoln	

1981		1982	
#	%	#	%
362	74.1	312	72.0
653	82.3	627	78.0
287	60.2	272	51.0
93	68.8	83	57.0
149	62.3	165	61.0
182	53.2	201	56.0
340	56.6	311	55.0
285	67.8	208	50.0
302	57.1	270	59.0
277	54.1	242	52.0
199	55.2	180	54.0
183	51.5	190	53.0
191	57.0	190	58.0
3,503	62.8	3,251	60.0

(Please refer to Table V.)

In the years preceding desegregation (before 1978) Cambridge was losing white students at a rate of 280 per year. Since 1979, Cambridge has lost white students at an annual rate of 263. Overall, Cambridge has lost fewer white students during desegregation than before. In only one year of desegregation, 1980, did Cambridge lose white students in excess of its average rate of white declining enrollment (368 to 280). A valid inference can perhaps be drawn that some of these 88 students left because of desegregation. In general, there does not appear to be any statistical proof of desegregation related white flight operating in Cambridge. *In fact, Cambridge has lost a smaller percentage of white students during its years of desegregation than have such communities as Newton, Lexington, and Wellesley which have not undergone desegregation.*

Additionally, there is no evidence that Cambridge has suffered any "middle-class" flight from its public schools during desegregation. In 1978, 54 percent of Cambridge elementary students received free or reduced lunches while in 1982, 52 percent of Cambridge students can be classified as income-poor.

There is also evidence that Cambridge is now attracting students from the non-public schools. (At least 50 parents identified themselves as coming from private and parochial schools this year.) Of course, under controlled open enrollment, Cambridge appears to be in a strong position to accommodate these parents since it offers substantial choice among its desegregating schools.

In Cambridge, many parents viewed "neighborhood" schools as discriminatory on the argument that they held students "hostage" on the basis of social class as well as race. Now no child has an implied property-right to attend any particular school and parents have more options to choose from than before desegregation.

To what extent has Cambridge eliminated segregation on the basis of income and economic status?

(Please refer to Table VI.)

Beyond eliminating racially identifiable schools, the Cambridge desegregation plan also seeks to reduce segregation on the basis of a student's family income and economic status. (For purposes of this analysis: a school

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Table V White Enrollment Decline: Pre and Post Desegregation

Year	White Enrollment	Number Decline	Mean Decline	Total Enrollment	Number Decline	Mean Decline
Pre Desegregation			(-280)			(-179)
1975	5,142			7,033		
1976	4,857	-285		6,969	-54	
1977	4,629	-228		6,682	-297	
1978	4,302	-327		6,495	-187	
Post Desegregation			(-262)			(-264)
1979	4,060	-242		6,257	-238	
1980	3,692	-368		5,778	-499	
1981	3,503	-189		5,577	-201	
1982	3,251	-252		5,463	-114	

Table VI Distribution of Low-Income Students: Pre and Post Desegregation

	Pre Desegregation		Post Desegregation							
	1978		1979		1980		1981		1982	
School	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Agassiz	58	25	60	22	54	24	48	20	33	12
Fitzgerald	435	54	289	42	361	56	295	49	316	55
Fletcher	244	78	295	95	320	88	221	62	267	63
Core	75	64								
Haggerty	43	57	96	56	118	76	89	66	101	69
Harrington	602	71	650	78	670	83	610	77	558	70
Kennedy	410	64	402	72	455	79	389	80	344	80
King	411	68	364	68	333	60	295	58	226	48
Lincoln	78	48	81	53						
Longfellow	282	55	278	57	272	63	212	50	292	46
Morse	132	36	183	50	182	51	131	45	147	39
Peabody	47	11	65	14	157	41	132	28	140	28
Roberts	318	82	355	89	297	76	268	80	239	72
Tobin	319	55	360	59	258	48	221	42	189	41
Webster	207	78	185	84	247	60	205	57	162	49
CAPS	67	35	66	33						
K-8 Average	3,598	54	3,794	64	3,724	67	2,984	54	2,865	52

Note: indicate low-income identifiable schools (more than 15% of the systemwide average of low-income students).

is identifiably "low-income" when its percentage of low-income students is more than 15 percentage points above the systemwide average for low-income students in a given year; a "middle-class" identifiable school is one in which the percentage of low-income students is less than 15 percentage points below the systemwide average for low-income students in a given year; and a school is considered desegregated on the basis of income when it falls within plus or minus 15 percent of the systemwide average for low-income students.)

- In 1978, the year before desegregation began, Cambridge had four schools that were identifiably low-income (the Roberts, Webster, Fletcher, and Harrington), and four schools were identifiably middle-class (the Peabody, Agassiz, CAPS, and Morse). In 1982, after four years of desegregation, Cambridge still has four schools that are identifiably low-income (the Kennedy, Roberts, Harrington, and Haggerty), while only one school (the Aggassiz)

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remains identifiably middle-class.

- In 1978, the four low-income identifiable schools enrolled 39 percent of all low-income students at the elementary level, and in 1982, such schools enroll 44 percent of all low-income students.
- While desegregation appears to have further concentrated low-income students in primarily four schools, it has also increased the percentage of economically desegregated schools from 50 percent in 1978 to 59 percent in 1982. Also, while some schools have become either economically desegregated or segregated, the system as a whole has undergone a net decline of low-income students from 3,598 (54 percent) in 1978 to 2,865 (52 percent) in 1982.

What is going on here? Clearly, there have been shifts in where poor children go to school in Cambridge, and most significantly these changes have taken place in schools that were once identifiable on the basis of race.

Also, of the five previously white identifiable schools, racial desegregation appears to be positively associated with economic desegregation in at least two schools, the Peabody and Haggerty.

On the other hand, the Harrington which was identifiably white still remains identifiable low-income. And, the Kennedy, which was predominantly low-income, is now identifiably low-income due to the fact that it was paired with another low-income school, the Roberts.

An interesting but not surprising development is that while the Agassiz has undergone significant desegregation by attracting in minority students, it has actually declined in terms of its low-income student population (58 in 1978 to 33 in 1982). This can be perhaps explained as a function of the controlled open enrollment policy in the sense that the Agassiz is apparently a particularly attractive school for middle-class minority parents.

Table VII Eliminating Racial and Low-Income Segregation

Racially Identifiable Schools	1978		1982		*Net Change*	
Minority	*Minority*	*Low-Income*	*Minority*	*Low-Income*	*Minority*	*Low-Income*
Roberts	63%	82%	42%	72%	-21%	-10%
Fletcher	62%	78%	47%	63%	-15%	-15%
Webster	57%	68%	48%	48%	-21%	-29%
King	37%	68%	48%	48%	-17%	-20%
Tobin	52%	55%	41%	41%	-21%	-14%
Systemwide Minority Proportion	34%	54%	40%	52%	+6%	-2%
White	*White*	*Low-Income*	*White*	*Low-Income*	*White*	*Low-Income*
Kennedy	93%	64%	72%	80%	-21%	+16%
Harrington	90%	71%	78%	70%	-12%	-1%
Peabody	84%	11%	54%	28%	-30%	+17%
Haggerty	80%	57%	57%	69%	-23%	+12%
Agassiz	79%	25%	61%	12%	-18%	-13%
Systemwide White Proportions	66%	54%	60%	52%	-6%	-2%

Of the five original minority identifiable schools, only the Roberts remains low-income identifiable, while in the Fletcher, Webster, King, and Tobin racial desegregation has resulted in a net reduction of low-income segregation as well. These schools are no longer segregated by race or social class.

Although the controlled open enrollment policy does not contain an explicit economic constraint, analysis of the two years in which this policy has been in effect (1981 and 1982) shows that parents' choices are being accommodated in a way which has had a positive effect in reducing the disparity between low-

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and middle-income students in 10 of 13 desegregating schools.

To what extent has Cambridge eliminated racially identifiable classrooms?

Table VIII
The Elimination of Racially Identifiable Classrooms (1978 and 1982)
*Number of Racially Identifiable Classrooms

School	*1978*	*1982*
Agassiz	4 (w)	0
Fitzgerald	0	1 (w)
Fletcher	12 (m)	0
Haggerty	3 (w)	1 (w)
Harrington	30 (w)	12 (w)
Kennedy	17 (w)	7 (w)
King	15 (m)	10 (m)
Longfellow	1 (w)	0
Morse	0	0
Peabody	7 (w)	0
Roberts	16 (m)	1 (w)
Tobin	14 (m)	5 (m)
NAS	-	0
Webster	5 (m)	-
CAPS	2 (w) & 3 (m)	-
Totals:	129 (64w & 65m)	37 (22w & 15m)

*This Table does not include any bilingual education classes.

In 1978, Cambridge had 129 racially identifiable classrooms (64 white and 65 minority). In 1982, after four years of desegregation, there are 37 racially identifiable classrooms (22 white and 15 minority). Also, before desegregation there were 16 classrooms which had one or no Black students, and in 1982, there are only three classrooms which have one Black student in them. Overall, Cambridge has made significant gains in reducing in-school segregation, and in abolishing in-school isolation of white and Black students.

A reasonable inference is that a great deal of this internal integration can be credited to the new assignment policy. In attempting to accommodate increased parental choice, the assignment officer must know exactly how many spaces are available within each school and within each classroom. Therefore, in making student assignment decisions, the assignment officer has the administrative controls necessary to assure not only racial balance by school, but also within each classroom.

Has desegregation been beneficial or harmful to students in terms of their academic performance?

When viewed within the context of desegregation, an analysis of Cambridge's (1981-1982) basic skills test results for grades 3, 6 and 8 in the areas of mathematics, reading, and writing show that:

1. minority students who attend "out of district" schools as a consequence of desegregation do slightly better than minority students who attend their old district schools:
   Minority Out of District % Passed (71.6)
   Minority In-District % Passed (68.0)
2. white students who attend "out of district" schools as a consequence of desegregation, do somewhat better than white students who attend their old district schools:
   White Out of District % Passed (78.7)
   White In-District % Passed (77.7)

A reasonable inference is that being reassigned (voluntarily or mandatorily) for purposes of school desegregation does not hurt the academic performance of either white or minority students, and such reassignments may be having a positive effect in terms of improving a student's academic performance.

3. in terms of economic desegregation, it is clear that middle-class students do better than low-income students in grades 3 and 6; however, by 8th grade low-income students outperform middle-class students in all three areas tested:

3rd Grade	*Middle-Class*	*Low-Income*
Math	97.1%	97.4%
Reading	88.9%	72.7%
Writing	75.3%	63.9%
6th Grade		
Math	93.2%	87.8%
Reading	65.6%	47.0%
Writing	60.9%	48.6%
8th Grade		
Math	69.8%	73.2%
Reading	70.1%	73.0%
Writing	68.7%	69.6%

It appears that whatever "advantages" middle-class students initially have over low-income students are obliterated by the 8th grade for most low-income students. It would indeed be bold to claim that Cambridge elementary schools are sending middle and low-income students into high school with essentially the same basic skills competencies as a direct

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result of school desegregation. There may be a positive relationship at work, but according to Cambridge school officials the major credit for this positive development goes beyond successful desegregation and even "good" teaching, involved parents, and other positive forces. For many knowledgeable people in Cambridge the credit lies in the fact that the system and the community have retained their belief in K-8 elementary schools. As one parent described it, the K-8 school provides her sons with a "stable" educational environment that makes it difficult for anybody (teachers, administrators and parents) to "pass the buck." In Cambridge, there is a strong consensus that with K-8 schools it's simply harder for kids to "fall through the cracks." In 1980, the school committee rejected a desegregation plan that would have "paired" all elementary schools within four educational zones or subdistricts. Although Superintendent William Lannon felt that pairing was the most "equitable" way to desegregate, the committee turned this proposal down due to the overwhelming consensus in the community for K-8 schools. (see *Three Alternatives for Eliminating Racial Imbalance and Racial Isolation*. Cambridge Public Schools, June 1980).

Table IX
Basic Skills Test Results by School
(1981-82 School Year)

School	*% Passed*	*Rank*
Agassiz	94.0	1
Morse	84.6	2
Longfellow	82.1	3
NAS	80.9	4
King	80.8	5
Fitzgerald	80.2	6
Haggerty	78.4	7
Tobin	76.7	8
Roberts	73.9	9
Peabody	73.0	10
Fletcher	70.6	11
Harrington	66.8	12
Kennedy	54.5	13
K-8 Average:	72.8	

Note: In 1981-82, Cambridge tested 1,810 students or 33% of its elementary school population.

For more information concerning Cambridge's basic skills testing program and a copy of a report on the 1981-82 school year results, readers are advised to contact Dr. Joseph Sateriale, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The State's requirement that school systems conduct basic skills testing is unrelated to Cambridge's decision to desegregate. The results of such tests, however, are not without important desegregation related implications.

With respect to the three schools scoring below the systemwide average of 72.8 percent:

- the Kennedy and the Harrington had the lowest test scores yet they enroll the largest percentage of white students of any schools at the elementary level,
- the Kennedy had the lowest test score and under controlled open enrollment has enrolled the fewest students and has had the highest percentage of students mandatorily assigned to it,
- the Harrington had the second lowest score and is the only racially identifiable school left in the city,
- of all the formerly minority-identifiable schools, the Fletcher has undergone the least change in terms of enrolling "out of district" students during desegregation,
- the Harrington enrolls the most "mainstreamed" Portuguese bilingual students and the Fletcher enrolls the most mainstreamed Hispanic students,
- both the Kennedy and the Harrington are low-income identifiable schools.

And with respect to the ten schools that scored above the systemwide average:

- the Agassiz scored the highest and enrolls the fewest low-income students,
- the six most attractive and/or accommodating schools to new minority and white students all scored above the systemwide average for basic skills competencies,
- the Agassiz and the Morse scored the highest and neither received any mandatory student assignments this academic year.

It may be safe to assume that the basic skills tests results will play a key role in terms of how parents make future choices about schools in Cambridge. And, no doubt such test scores will become another factor in generating competition for available school-age children.

Some conclusions

The foregoing analysis clearly shows Cambridge has undergone substantial desegregation by employing a combination of mandatory and voluntary student reassignment measures, and has otherwise met the test of "maximum feasible desegregation." What is

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interesting about Cambridge is that the desegregation conflict generated a political consensus to *increase competition* as the best way of assuring social justice and providing equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of their race, ethnicity and social-economic status. This is truly a startling development in the annals of American public education!

While "choice" played a prominant role in causing racial segregation in Cambridge, and although controlled choice initially failed as an effective desegregation device in 1979, there is now strong evidence that the current controlled use of choice in governing all new student assignments is producing positive desegregation-related effects. Under the present student assignment policy there has been no resegregation of formerly minority identifiable schools and significant gains have been made in further facilitating the desegregation objectives of the school committee. If Cambridge abolished this policy and returned all "out of district" students to their old neighborhood schools the system would clearly become resegregated:

Table X
What Would Happen to Formerly Minority Isolated Schools if all "Out of District" Students Were Returned to their old "Home District" Schools!

	Minority Enrollment With Desegregation		*Minority Enrollment Absent Desegregation*	
School	#	%	#	%
Fletcher	167	47	239	47
King	227	48	228	59
Roberts	140	42	239	72
Tobin	187	41	220	55
Webster	154	46	154	55

In short, the Cambridge plan works.

Does the Cambridge plan have transfer value for other systems!

I would suggest the Cambridge plan is not an idiosyncratic success story, and that how Cambridge school officials have used "controlled choice" to strengthen desegregating schools can be replicated by other systems regardless of whether such plans have been adopted voluntarily or ordered by a federal court.

As administered in Cambridge, controlled open enrollment shows that:

1. When employed as the sole method of assigning students, controlled choice can be used as effective strategy in accommodating the legitimate interests of parents who are concerned with both the quality of their children's education and of having access to the schools of their choice within desegregation constraints.
2. Increased choice does not have to be a "trade off" to a system achieving "maximum feasible desegregation", and that controlled choice assignment plans can be implemented in a way which is procedurally fair to *all* parents.
3. The use of explicit racial ratios that reflect the actual racial composition of the system as a whole not only assures genuine desegregation, but it further assures equal access to desegregating schools and programs. A key finding based on Cambridge is that by making *all* schools open to controlled choice increases the educational options of *all* students. An inherent problem with limiting choice to only a few magnet schools and by having desegregating schools reflect a racial ratio that is different from the actual systemwide proportions (Chicago) only serves to reduce the educational options of students.
4. Generating *increased competition* for students strengthens desegregating schools and is a prudent hedge against the further erosion of public confidence in public schools.
5. Size may be a factor in why controlled choice works in Cambridge, but I would submit that larger systems would in fact be able to offer *more* choices, and in terms of transportation, controlled choice could operate within specified educational zones or subdistricts in large cities such as Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles and Nashville.

What do you think!